

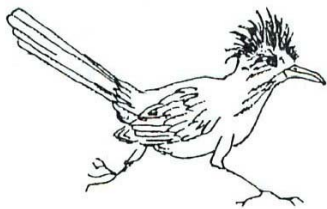
>>>>>

VIP2VIP

<<<<<

Season 3, Volume 1 Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

November 10, 2003



Persimmon Gap

Mark Kirtley- Visitor Center

Nettie & Gifford Babcock- Visitor Center

Castolon

Charles Gorecki- Interpretation

Steve Harper- Camp Host & Backcountry

Rio Grande Village

Marsha & John Coates- Visitor Center

Barbara & Bill Baldwin- Camp Hosts

Royann & Royce Brockett- Camp Hosts

June & Tony Jacobson- Backcountry

Chisos Basin

Ginny & Jim Herrick- Visitor Center

Lee & Joe Pytel- Camp Hosts

Carol & Bob Schemm- Camp Hosts

SCA's

Katrina Jensen- PJ Interpretation

Matthew Sandate- PJ Interpretation

Alicia Riley- PJ Interpretation

Panther Junction

Becky Reiger- Volunteer Coordinator's Assistant



The hike to the South Rim on Oct. 29th was led by Dan Leavitt, summer seasonal interpreter, & Joe Sirotnak, Park botanist. Volunteers energetically lined up for the before picture, and lounged on the rim for the "we made it" photo!



Fall Volunteer Training ran from October 20th to the 31st. Each event filled day stretched the volunteers intellectually and physically.



Mary Kay Manning's "Desert Plants" guided walk on Oct. 30, gave each VIP a great example of interpretive talks plus valuable knowledge about Big Bend plants.



VIPs were a lot more interested than this picture would indicate. Don Corrick & Tom Alex team led the Oct. 22nd field trip on Geology, Paleontology, & Human History. The history of this area was resplendently brought to life during this marvelous excursion.



"Lions & Bears" was the title of a hike up the Lost Mine Trail led by Raymond Skiles, Park wildlife biologist, on Oct. 23rd. Volunteers learned about Big Bend's native animal population while enjoying a wonderful hike.

Welcome back returning VIP'S!

These are the answers received to the question "What did you do over your summer vacation?"

RGV Campground Hosts Bill & Barbara with Royann & Royce



Royann & Royce Brockett spent much of their summer in the rain. They traveled east to New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. They were able to visit with all their children this summer, before returning to their home in Albuquerque. They have been visiting Big Bend for approximately 10 years & volunteering for the past 5 years. They love to explore the backcountry. Royce enjoys finding and taking pictures of all the varied things people see while hiking the desert.

Barbara & Bill Baldwin were ready to get back to the tranquility of Big Bend after a summer filled with travel. They began the summer by taking a trip to Rexford, Montana accompanied by one of their daughters and son-in-law. On the way, they stopped at Seeley Lake, MT, to visit with Jennifer Dyer and Wayne Strevel, former VIPs at RGV. The Baldwins continued their travels to Glacier NP and then into Canada. They enjoyed Fort Steel and Lake Louise. They visited Mt. Rushmore NM before returning home to Odessa, TX. Of the 13 years they have been married, they have spent 12 of those in Big Bend.



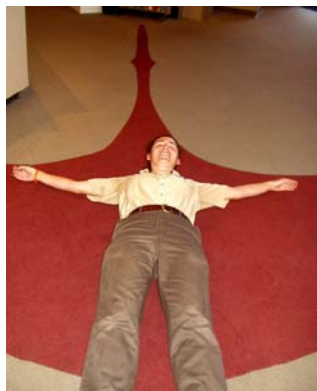
Mark enjoys a rest from hiking.

Mark Kirtley enjoyed himself this summer, which is always an important accomplishment. He spent a great deal of his time camping and hiking in the Red Rock National Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Montana. Mark met up with friends in Glacier NP, where he always enjoys long hikes. He traveled to Bolder, CO, to visit with his brother. Mark also hiked and camped in the Grand Canyon NP and the Gila Wilderness Area.

Becky Reiger worked as a camp host in a very small fly fishing campground (12 sites) in the Lassen National Forest in northern California. On the return from a short hike, a bear ran towards her from the meadow below. Using knowledge learned at Big Bend last year, she looked around for something to throw at the bear. The bear was frightened away by the only thing available to throw, tree bark! The trip north allowed time for a visit to Joshua Tree NP, where Samantha Schroeder and Whit Hibbard, Big Bend VIPs, were working. Before arriving in Big Bend this fall, she spent time in San Antonio visiting her son & daughter.

After leaving Big Bend in late March, **Jim & Ginny Herrick** headed to Pomona, CA, for a Habitat for Humanity build. This was the start of a summer of working on houses. The other projects were for 2 of their sons. From mid-April until mid-May, they were in Las Cruces, NM, at their son Jeff's house. They turned half of the attached garage into a living space, which will also serve as a passive solar heat collector. From there, they traveled to Syracuse, NY. There they helped their son, Mike, and his wife, Samantha, prepare their recently purchased 90 year old house for their late July relocation from the Boston area. Family reunions in Kentucky & Ohio were followed by visits with siblings in Michigan and New England. Before leaving the area, their son, Kevin, introduced Jim to rock climbing in upstate New York. In September, they picked up their new Lazy Daze RV. At 26 foot, it's welcome space after their first 3 years full-timing in a 20' Roadtrek. Before arriving at Big Bend, they continued the work on Jeff's home in Las Cruces, a project they will continue to work on in January when they leave here!

Katrina compares sizes with the Quetzalcoatlus Northropi.



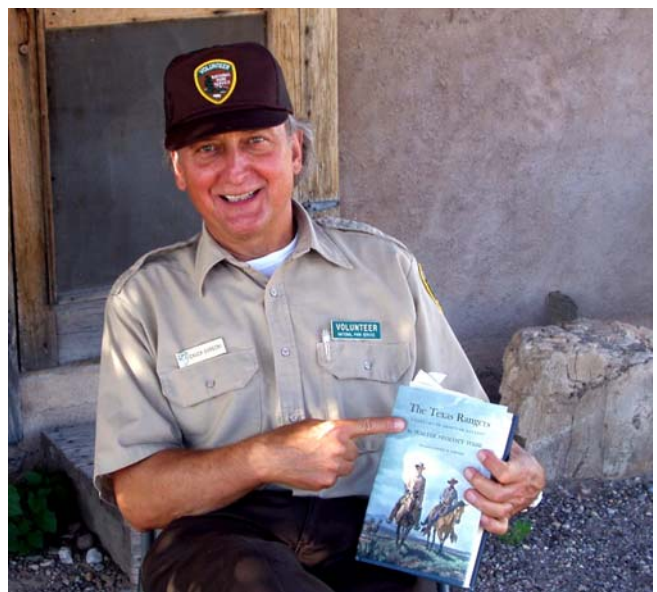
Katrina Jensen spent this summer working for the Trail Crew in the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Her jobs included riding and packing stock, cutting logs off trails, and building drainage systems. She also traveled to Denmark for a month visit with her family.

After leaving Big Bend last year, **Bob & Carol Schemm** only spent a short amount of time at their home in Carrizo Springs, TX before hitting the road again for a trip to Tucson and Sun City, AZ. In May, they returned to Wind Cave National Park for their summer volunteer positions as campground hosts. Wind Cave celebrated 100 years as a national park this summer! While traveling through Oklahoma, they were able to spend time visiting with their daughter. Earlier this fall, they lost their long time companion, Tad, their campground dog. Although Tad can never be replaced, they did get a 9 week old black Poodle they named "Tattoo". Still too young to make campground rounds with Bob, Tattoo is a campground dog-in-training.

This past summer was an exceptional one for **Steve Harper**. He married Judy Brinkerhoff, a young woman he dated in high school 50 years ago! Judy is a gardening columnist, advocate of native plants, botanist and birder. They spent most of the summer at her home in western Sonoma County in Northern California. While she recovered from foot surgery, Steve wandered in the redwoods, along the beaches, and enjoyed the grandkids. Steve and Judy are enjoying their new Airstream trailer at Castolon, where Steve is working as a backcountry volunteer and a campground host.

Volunteer Corner

Castolon's new Interpretive volunteer, Charles Gorecki, learned to love nature and the outdoors growing up in Superior, Wisconsin. He vividly remembers his father's one week vacation each year, and how much he, his older sister & younger brother looked forward to it all year long. The family spent this special time in a cabin on a lake enjoying many outdoor activities, including fishing. Charles loved these close family times so much that he would become ill when it was time to return home! These early experiences gave him a direction in life, with a strong desire to have a house on a lake, filled with family and friends.



Charles graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in education. Like many young college men in the 1960's, Charles was in ROTC. He put his career plans on hold to be commissioned into the Army. When he left for his tour of duty in Vietnam, his daughter, Bonnie, was 1 1/2 years old, and his wife pregnant with his son, John. After spending a year overseas, he discovered jobs in the educational field were hard to find in Superior, WI. He felt extremely fortunate to obtain a job teaching social studies to grades 10 through 12 in a very small school. After a year of teaching, Charles decided to change professions and take over his father-in-law's Standard Oil business. He enjoyed a lucrative business until the oil embargo changed the way business was conducted by the oil companies. After considering all his options, and his desires, he decided to go back into the educational field.

He earned his masters degree in guidance and counseling at the University of Wisconsin in Oshkosh, WI. After graduation, he stayed in Oshkosh, working as a guidance counselor for the university. Just as Charles was settling into his new career, his life took a major turn. The end of his marriage provided him with an opportunity to move overseas. He accepted a job with Kitzingen Elementary School in Germany, where he remained for 6 years. His two oldest children came to live with him while he worked in Germany. However his youngest daughter, Sarah, remained with her mother. The community they settled in was close-knit and friendly, providing opportunities to develop long and lasting friendships. Charles took advantage of every chance to explore and learn as much as he could, by touring Europe with friends, and on his own.

Upon his return to the US, he accepted a guidance counseling position in Astoria, OR. However after a year, Charles felt the strong need to return to his roots. Moving back to Wisconsin to be closer to his family, Charles accepted a guidance counseling position with the Drummond School District in northern Wisconsin. He bought a fixer-upper house on Sweet Lake, and started the process of renovating it. He had finally realized his childhood dream of the house on a lake! He continued to work on his house and enjoy the lake for 11 years.

Charles has always loved travel and used his vacation time to take trips. When his youngest daughter, Sarah, was living in Taiwan, he met her for a 3 week vacation in Vietnam. Charles was able to replace his memories of a war torn country with the new reality of a very changed country. He encourages others to return to that area and to witness the changes. He has also toured Greece and he hiked Mount Olympus on his way through Yugoslavia.

In May 2002, Charles retired. He spent a full year enjoying his house, gardening, fishing, fishing, and fishing. Escaping the cold last February, he took a trip to the south. He visited numerous areas in Texas, including Big Bend National Park. From here he traveled to Alabama and Mississippi, before returning home to Wisconsin. During his absence the septic system in his house froze, forcing him to remodel the last room, the bathroom. Now that his house is complete, he is free to travel as much as he wishes. In September, he went to Curacao, an island off the coast of Venezuela. This was a trip organized by his scuba dive instructors from Wisconsin. He had received his diving certification in Lake Superior. While in Curacao, Charles enjoyed 2 to 3 dives a day in the beautiful waters.



Charles is an avid reader and is excited to learn as much as he can while spending time in the desert at Big Bend. His teaching experience and natural curiosity will be a valuable resource to visitors in Castolon. After his volunteer time here ends, he is considering volunteering at Gulf Island National Seashore, while living on an island off the coast of Mississippi. Charles is just beginning to explore the opportunities available to volunteers willing to travel all over the world. He has a completely new and exciting life beginning to unfold ahead of him.

Volunteer Groups

A group of 10 young adults from the Voyager Outward Bound School offered their services to Raymond Skiles in Resource Management on the afternoon of October 20th. Voyager Outward Bound is chartered by Outward Bound International. Their philosophy is to help people discover & develop their potential to care for themselves, others, & the world around them through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings. Big Bend is the second segment of their 85 day course, which started with a month canoeing the waters in northern Minnesota. Since national parks are their classrooms, they feel it is important to volunteer some time during their course to enhance their education. Additionally, working in the parks supports their basic philosophy of caring for the earth.



The group spent the afternoon planting native grasses to help restore an area that was part of last spring's controlled burn near RGV. They also cut river cane to make room for equipment to assess leaks and do a contour survey of an earthdam originally built in the 1950's as a fishing pond. After a few years the pond went into disuse. In the 1980's it was rehabbed for the endangered *Gambusia Gagei*, also

known as Big Bend Mosquito fish. Warm spring-fed ponds at RGV are the only habitat for these fish in the world, so this pond is critical to the *Gambusia*'s survival.

The volunteers enjoyed the physical work as a welcome change from their typical daily routine of backpacking in the Big Bend area. Most of them are from the East Coast, and this is their first experience in the desert. Recent rains gave them the opportunity to see the desert come alive. These young adults said they definitely would like to visit the park again, and one volunteer said she would love to bring her parents here! Another commented that star-gazing doesn't get any better than this. Their stay of a month gave them time to experience many aspects of the park that short-term visitors may miss.



Volunteering also gives them a small glimpse of the tasks that are necessary to maintain national parks. A groups like this can accomplish a great amount of important work in a short amount of time. Big Bend is grateful to all volunteer help!



Volunteer Notes

- Once your paperwork for reimbursement has been submitted, please wait 2-3 days and then see Terry Boren, in person, in the Administration Office, Mon-Fri, 8-5, to sign for your check.

Activities & Events

Flu Shots- Fri, Nov. 14, 3:00-6:00pm, PJ Community Room.

Health Fair & Flu Shots- Sat, Nov. 15, 10:00am-3:00pm, Terlingua/Study Butte Community Center. Call 432-371-2412 by Nov 12 to schedule transportation

"Dearly Departed", a comedy- Nov. 14, 15, 21, & 22 7:00pm. Matinee Nov. 17 & 23 2:00pm.

"Behind The Store", Chili cookoff Building on Hwy 170.

Thanksgiving- Thurs, Nov. 27.

Dance off- Sat, Nov. 22, 10:00pm. Starlight Theatre.

Holiday Auction- Thurs, Dec. 4, 6:00pm, PJ Community Room.

Holiday Dinner- Tues, Dec. 16, PJ Community Room.

San Vicente School Program- Thurs, Dec. 18, 6:00pm. *The Velveteen Rabbit.*

Ongoing:

Big Bend Community Choir- Wednesdays, 5:30 pm, Terlingua Elementary Band Room. For information call 477-2377 or 477-2442.

Crafts - Monday nights, 6:30-9:00 pm. PJ Community room.

Check the bulletin board at PJ for details and updates!



HELP WANTED!

Volunteers are needed to help with various functions, including the Holiday Dinner. Check the bulletin board for a sign up sheet today!